



RESOLUTION

URGING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO INCLUDE THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES IN THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM AND TO IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF PHILIPPINE CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES TO OBTAIN VISAS TO THE UNITED STATES.

WHEREAS, the Visa Waiver Program was established by the United States in 1986 to eliminate unnecessary barriers to travel and stimulate the tourism industry; and

WHEREAS, according to the State Department, the Visa Waiver Program enables nationals of thirty-six countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of ninety days or less without obtaining a visa; and

WHEREAS, to be admitted to the Visa Waiver Program, a country must meet various criteria as designated by federal law and ultimate admission is at the discretion of the United States government; and

WHEREAS, the Hawaii Tourism Authority reports approximately double the visitor arrivals from the Republic of Korea since its admission to the Visa Waiver Program and there is a great potential for growth in visitors from the Republic of the Philippines to Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, obtaining a visa for travel to the United States is currently difficult for citizens of the Republic of the Philippines and inclusion in the Visa Waiver Program or otherwise simplifying the process of acquiring a visa for citizens of the Philippines would allow for increased tourism and business from the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Honolulu should encourage visitors from the Philippines to diversify Honolulu's tourism industry and strengthen the local economy; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it urges the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Homeland Security to work to include the Republic of the Philippines in the Visa Waiver Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in lieu of including the Republic of the Philippines in the Visa Waiver Program the State Department is urged to simplify or relax visa requirements and procedures for citizens of the Philippines to encourage tourism and business travel to the United States; and



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BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and members of Hawaii's Congressional delegation.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tom BERG

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

OCT 24 2011

Honolulu, Hawaii

Councilmembers